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SELECTED AND RANDOM ISSUES IN POLITICS

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Praise be the Maker and its Creations.



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Backgrounds and Key Terms

- Politics
- Gender Justice
- Power
- Economy
- Other Issues

Notable Sayings

Jean Jacques Rousseau: No perfect democracy exists nor ever will.

Steven Lee: War is fought in order to achieve peace.

Erich Fromm: God is the higher image and self of humans.

Karl Marx: Those self-earned goods cannot be abolished.

Are there people who threaten to throw us into the sea? Well, may we learn to swim.

–Slavoj Zizek

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DEMOCRACY AS AN EXAMPLE OF A FINE GOVERNANCE

Jeffrey Stout:

Officials do ill things hidden from the public eye to avoid criticism. These persons then denied involvement. They were dodging from questions...Rulers who plead necessity are enemies of democracy. These (wo)men are not trustworthy...Democratic leadership is neither a ground for tyrants nor purists. –*Democracy and Tradition*, 2004: 186–8.

Democracy as a tradition has downsides and strongholds. There are weaknesses like majority vote, herd mentality, undeserving officials, and so on. What the body of the said government does in popular voting is to forget to appreciate the quality and balance between or domination over quantity. However, as the mass society, what matters is the call of many. This can disregard the few who have chosen the rulers with values and principles.

To say, there was a candidate who has a background of degree or has achieved its political study yet has no financial resources as spent on the former studies. The other hand has a political runner who is good in business, also finished four years in college, but has not taken a master's degree in politics. The mass society when basing on low economic status *might* elect the latter one or the candidate who is oriented in business.

But what will happen if the burden of politics can strike the hailed candidate? (S)he will be exhausted and can disregard the interest of the people. This can lead to negligence. Or worse, these might bear corruption. The elected leader will dare for more resources even from the tax of the people who have given him or her seat. This material will be used in order to restore the ‘business.’ But what makes it ill is that the general interest of the masses was forgotten even if they have paid taxes.

Looking at the advantage(s) of democracy, there is a right to vote for successive leaders, right to strike or protest, forming of unions, and so forth. Democracy can both create and put an end to tyrants. It creates by the way of giving positions to the persons with ill intention in the guise of bandwagon and persuasive speeches. This could also lead to the downfall of the abusive and oppressive leaders through unions and strikes of those who have awakened their political and moral values. Democracy in this sense is like a coin with two sides.

Another thing that Stout appointed was democracy as *neither for fools nor for purists*. What *fools* mean here is not those who are ignorant. But, this can also refer to those who claim themselves as correct in contrast to their deeds which are malicious and destructive. The term *purist* can refer to persons who only focus on a particular point of view without having a glance to the others. It tries to say that there are instances in which

democracy needed to be taken with stands by a person. This can have the other case of being ‘neutral’ or not taking part even though the intentions of officials are clear and have benefits.

Thus it is a call for flexibility and vigilance. Flexibility here is not merely on having multiple views but also the ability to connect these with one another. Vigilance as well is not like a ‘twenty four-seven’ watchfulness. This can be attributed to a thought process even if one will do so before and after sleeping. Waking up in the morning can lead a person to refresh and have a new start through succession with times until they have flourished the capacity to discern leaders or persons to put into the political chairs.

“Blessed is the land whose ruler is wise and noble. Its child [a leader as well] dines at the right time.”

Ecclesiastes 10:17

Seeking people who will ride over the wheels of fate is not easy. There are large but sea-sick, have gone to school yet ill-mannered, clever although lazy, etc. Intelligent leaders with compassion are rare. But they are needed especially by those who are under the pyramid of wealth. It is not wicked that rulers have riches and have immeasurable authority. This is even good to consider and elect these (wo)men that will make changes for nations. To

think that these are trained to use and invest the wealth wisely is one of the good starts.

Dining at the right time is an idiom that can refer to a state in which everyone has their goods fairly shared, before the authorities will sit on their table and chew everything. It may point out as well on conserving strength and to use the said idea on things that matter. Leaders are furnishing themselves into fine one not in order to be praised but to enable ruling without difficulty. A child will learn to work out or roll the pedals of a bicycle. This is not only good for him or her, but also for parents who will not worry to fetch the young one going from home to school and vice versa. Back to the case of chosen people who lead, they will be self-sustaining so those who cannot set their feet on normality will count on them.

Rick Riordan SJ(2001)¹ reminisce Plato on choosing leaders over the qualifications of persuasion yet empty and flattering.² This is a warning against the tyrants hidden with the masked as redemption. Havoc on the state can neither blame candidates nor the voters. It is the culture of corruption that lacks prevention. There is a need for a philosopher and at the same time a ruler. Political will is not only measured by the power of speech but the reason why. The backgrounds of the ‘runners’ are also asked, expertise, experience, and morals.

¹ Riordan. *People Power*. 2001 : 69–73.

² Plato, *The Republic* Bk. V 473 d-e edited by Michael M. Morgan, (Indianapolis : Hackett, 1996) p. 140.

Competence is one of the measures in politics rather than the ‘choice of the many’ and merely prestige. Otherwise, the arena of leadership becomes like a theater play with clowns making the people merry while they have not prepared their healthy food. It is likened to preference of wants over needs. That is such a disorder.

ECONOMY

Agur's prayer: Oh, God. Give me things I need, neither less nor lack.

Do not make me so rich that I may forget you and look at the treasures instead. Neither will I be poor and tempted to steal.

Proverbs 30: 7-9

This belief is still relevant today. The state of the middle class or in which a person was not deprived of goods nor exceeding. Being in the average level might be easy to attain or dwelt in. But there are also hindrances surrounding an individual. Poor governance, irresponsible multiplying of population, religion that romanticizes poverty, etc., count to this factor. The said things have shaped the view of people and years regarding the economic or social status.

Reaching or attaining the state of middle class living is not 'easy' as a click of fingers. It takes time, effort, and support especially from the larger institutions in the society. Families needed accountable planning and upbringing of their offsprings. State was there to address the needs of the multitudes, especially the marginalized and unprivileged. The Church also helps the communities through charitable works, and not merely evangelization that 'shares mouthpiece' even without showing concrete

actions. School as a ‘second home’ guides and shapes the people’s skills starting from their young age, and it also aims to shunning ignorance.

Times are not merely on rush and what is customary. This could also mean prolonging. Those who are left behind as well are given other chances to set foot on their own. It cannot be limited to the round thing with 12 hours within which arrows roll twice to make a day. Even a day cannot make an industrious person rich in a ‘blink of eyes.’

Poverty is difficult to deal with not because of laziness or the crowd who keep on mocking those who shed sweat in order to put meals on the table. There are (wo)men who call it a ‘friend’ even though it killed many by hunger, thirst, and lesser health care. For them, it is just a passive state which can be erased as time goes by or with the ‘trust in God.’ Thus being awake and looking on poverty as a foe is a very courageous behavior. Getting rich with hard work is not selfish. Neither will one become poor because of helplessness. There are needs which have to be evaluated, not just the physiological or financial ones, as what the popular vocabulary recorded.

Talking about crime, it is not only by a ‘tempted eye.’ It can have numerous factors. Lack of resources, expensive market products, lower wages, rising population, and other absence of solutions belonged to these. People who have not enough food will find ways to sustain not just their guts but for

their own families. They do whatever it takes even against their morals, conscience, and the law. This is a call for prevention instead of just treating the ‘wounds’ without seeking for its cause.

Theft happens not just because of ‘itchy hands.’³ There are stomachs who are still churning, even if the arms already worked, from dawn to dusk. Something is blank in this setting and is difficult to explain. Lower wages can also be rooted from a trader’s lack of resources, for instance, that sharing the profits to his or her partner(s) can lead to an empty pocket. Thus there is a need to lessen the number of helpers or workers, if not salaries.

Lucius Seneca said that the practice of wisdom is based on simplicity but not penance.⁴ Simplicity is done through modesty and complying the needs of an individual. It is to be in between the wealthy and the deprived. Excessive and unnecessary wealth can cause evil such as greed and jealousy. When one has to hide its unused wealth from the sight of many, there might be anxiety and lack of faith with others. Those who have not obtained even basic needs in living can lead to evil as well. Thirst, fixation, crimes, and deprivation of goods fall down to this.

³ ‘Itchy hands’: a known Filipino idiom that refers to those who are easily tempted by what the others have.

⁴ *Letters From a Stoic*(*Epistulae Morales*)Chapter 5, verse 5 . *On the Philosopher’s Mean*. Translated by Richard M. Gummere.

Penance on the other hand is losing things that are ‘inherent’ or primary needs of a person. It was mistaken as a self-sacrifice and running towards the heavens. This is not the business of philosophy or even in politics. Leaders also needed to master their skills in resourcefulness like budgeting or investment. Otherwise, taxes for example, cannot grow and flow back to the mass where it came from.

Imagine a child who did not choose to be born from a family suffering from financial crisis. The leaders of its community did not take a glance and have no lend even sharing their resources. That little person cannot see the goodness of this world as hindered by irresponsibility. It is neglecting even the basic needs of a young one to live in a clear environment. This is an evil of omission or escaping one’s responsibility.

If a person claims to love the *(way of life) but is ashamed to have simple foods and clothes, (s)he is not worthy to engage in great conversations.*

Confucius’ *Analects* 4.9

Simplicity is not ‘easy’ in the sense that there are luxuries difficult to deny. Neither will it be small and not finding things that are part of one’s need. That is another story. This context entails the challenge of temperance and avoiding excessive consumerism. It is not malicious to have ambition for

higher standards of life. The thing to question is whether it is a need or a want. Wants are those that cherish the eyes for a while, needs can last, companionship, family, social life, wealth, and so forth.

Thinkers like Confucius, Siddhartha Gautama also known as Buddha, etc. have reminded that one has to take what is needed. Otherwise, it only costs a burden, in hands and mind. Getting along with a fine ecology is to know one's place in the universe. Other beings like inanimate ones are also 'consumers.' Electrical devices needed to be charged or energy being conserved. It is such a waste of turning a torch light in the daytime. That is against the *dao* and nature.

Resourcefulness is a single word yet supported with numerous approaches. There are people who brand it as a 'miser's business.' It is important to spend money on things that are aligned with the person's state and time. For example, youth cannot buy fancy vehicles when they come from a marginalized family. They take bicycles instead as a mode of transportation. Their need for it is filled yet different from those which are 'high class' or glittering ones. So the said group is not stingy when they buy things that fit in their budget.

Rulers and ruled people can achieve resourcefulness by developing this means. Knowing a capacity, sustenance, proper use of materials, and

implementation of projects aligned with the needs of society. It does not deny riches to flow into the needy. Rather, this is used as a reason for the people to inhabit the use of resources for the incoming generations and maintain a balanced society.

SOCIAL CONCERNS

Leticia Ramos-Shahani, for example(1991),⁵ pointed out some root of weaknesses in the society. The ironic thing is that these were also mistaken as the source of a culture and development. These are the following observations.

- Family and Home – There are people who are apparently content with what is provided by home. It disregards the bigness or positive impacts of further engagement into politics.
- Societal Status – Those who are in the lower parts of the society cannot fully exercise their freedom or even raise their voice.
- Culture and Language Barriers – Diversity that can lead to separation. For example, the educated and the marginalized. The educated have job opportunities, especially white collar ones.⁶ Blue collar⁷ was commonly associated with those who merely finished elementary or high school level.
- History – There are unlearned parts and misinterpreted.
- Educational system – `*Paluin ang magtanong*⁸ behavior. Whatever known idea must be acknowledged with even less authenticity. Creativity in learning was discouraged.

⁵ Shahani, Leticia R. *Paghubog sa Mamamayan, Katatagan ng Bayan* [Program 1] : *Panunumbalik ng Moralidad*. Second Edition. 1991. pp. 11.

⁶ White Collar Job : Information, Teaching, Idea Implementation, etc.

⁷ Blue Collar Job : Handmade Production, (e.g., vehicle operator, construction worker).

⁸ “*Palu-in ang magtanong.*” – Slap that one who asks questions. This slogan has created fear for the students to challenge the skills of their teachers and fellow students to elaborate information.

- Religion – ‘God will provide, there is no need for work.’ This considers laziness and making excuses for it as ‘letting God to handle.’
- Livelihood (Lower Level) – No Sustenance from the Higher Part of Society
- Political Condition – Vote Buying and Selling
- Mass Media – Romanticizing Poverty; Those who are not ‘rich’ are saved as they can have the ‘promise of heaven.’ Being financially challenged is promised with the ‘treasures’ of the afterlife.
- Leadership and Role – Abuse in Authority

Simone de Beauvoir:

Oppression splits the world into halves, such as the enlightened and the condemned...[The oppressed deals with the absurdities]. But it has a solution which is to deny a *false* harmony in humanity, and prove that (s)he is a person and indeed free, through revolting against the tyrants.

–*Ethics of Ambiguity*, 1976. p. 83.

It is considerable to protest against injustice even though it is done by those who are in the seat of politics. This does not cause downfall to the society but to restore balance and fairness instead. Going against tyranny is like preventing a plague from taking over humanity before it becomes an

unbearable one. Correction of the action is what the reason is command rather than yelling. It is asking for clear and insightful answers.

Revolt is not merely bringing an ill system down to its feet but also to give way for the deserved persons. Taking changes is not a ‘single blow’ action but relying on the process and choice of the people. To strike over the oppression is opening one’s eyes and to wake up from a nightmare in the guise of sweet dreams.

Peter Sloterdijk:

If we were asked how we would date ourselves in the history of things, we would have to answer truthfully...From the point forward, we have lived in an age in which the womb and production converge. We revise nature, and stand at the beginning of the second week of creation, on the *monday* of the human being.

—*What Happened in the 20th Century?*, 2018 : p. 120

Humanity is indeed the apex of creation. But this excuse cannot be counted as valuable especially in the current situations. Leaders who were not suited for the positions, graft, manipulation, and injecting fear to the masses in order to hide the truth has something to do with this.

The ‘evil’ side of humanity is boastfulness disregarding reason. There is an imbalance and chaos. People have forgotten the smallness which is already the perfection and created false laws in order to manipulate one another and satisfy their mundane cravings. Revision of historical pieces, blinding the people away from truth, and stealing their trust are such hideous things to say so. It does not mean that the rise of humanity is an imbalance for the ecology. But this is a reminder that the human ways of knowledge are also limited. Politics for example is like forming a ‘heaven on earth’ yet is difficult to execute the plans. There is theft in the guise of services and entertainment. It causes distraction.

Because information was given to people and indeed convincing, few of them are searching for the deeper values of things. The kings and queens are sent down from heaven—this is what is common to the eyes of the sovereign. But the question is, how can these intasked men and women bring people back to the ‘paradise.’

Slavoj Zizek in his book (*Living in the End Times*) advised that there are so-called *Kantian Secret Clauses*. It is like finding a truth as a middle ground despite uncertain data. In there, he entails to *pretend publicly to consult authorities, but do not trust their words.*⁹ It is important to revere people in the high ranks as a fellow person but not deify them nor treat them like butlers. Following orders are important to gain harmonious living and a sense of community. But whenever there are a lack of reasons, it is considerable to turn one’s back from it. Aside from a waste of time is also a risk towards individuals and the next generations.

Approaching the authorities is beneficial as it acts for the elevation of humankind, if not perfection. Those people who worked in power have also not thrown the trust away. It is a self-defeat of human image as the guardians of the ecology and rather made them into parasites who only feed on the lower being than them. This is not to erase or annihilate danger.

⁹ Slavoj Zizek, *Living in the End Times*, 2011. p. 16

Rather, it prepares the system of governance and those with its rules to adapt with the changes of the environment.

GENDER EQUITY

Luce Irigaray can promote gender justice in the following paradigm. *If we assumed to be the heavens and became like God...it is like a head splitting from the body which actualizes one's thoughts...A boy was born out of a woman. But, he claims to create her¹⁰, forgetting his real beginning.*¹¹

The said statement is indeed striking as it is calling for balance and harmony. Imagine that the world is full of males. This might have 'asexual reproduction' or no sharing of tasks which cause a heavy load to think so. There will be no one to tend the young nor shed some sweat in order to fetch the crops. The universe, even in politics, is composed of parties. Those are agreeing while the others deny. It is not constant in the sense of merely settling in a single spot forgetting there are others.

Skies needed the ground as well to store the waters. The governance does not only rely on fathers but also with mothers. A man and woman created an offspring. This can be brought to the political arena. Patriarchs will impose laws and femininity will guide the children to exercise their skills and powers, both firm and gentle.

¹⁰ "From the rib," an idiom that might connotes Adam and Eve.

¹¹ *Sharing the World.*(London, New York : Continuum, 2008). pp. 13–14.

“Women are clumsy and frail.” “They are only good with gossip.” These stereotypes have hindered the openness and acceptance for women or other classes to run in politics. Male superiority indeed makes the governance strong but can lack the balance with compassion and patience. This is not to spread name-calling on every opposite. Both are complying with one another through times.

“It is too hard for a queen to rule a kingdom.” “She might have broken her legs.” Of course, no one has helped or guided her to lead and pave the way for a nation. Who will help the king then if he is sick?

Gender justice was also promoted not merely by Jesus Christ but also through Mother Mary. It is reversing the case of the old testament with the new. Jonathan Arnold on his article¹² has shared that the said patron was not only a lady but also a woman of faith. The Old Testament has Eve which comes from Adam’s rib. The reason why it is symbolized by rib¹³ is that being near to heart. This encompasses fairness neither too low nor high. If it was taken from the sole of the feet, the woman became inferior.

Jesus Christ was the second Adam, and Mary the other Eve. The New Testament then leads to justice and a wider view on sexuality. Mary bears a child in her womb with the will of God and the holy spirit.

¹² *Mary, Mother of God : The Equality of Women and the Dignity of Motherhood*. 2021

¹³ Genesis 2 : 21

Even the Messiah while carrying the cross has shown gender justice. *Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.*¹⁴ Women who are barren while young from some of the ancient times were seen as laughable ones. It does not also mean that ‘careless’ mothers are to be nailed in the cross as well. This tries to say that whether a woman has given birth to child[ren] or not, dignity remains strong. No woman was left without a choice of her own. She was not the object of hate from the ‘old man in the sky.’

¹⁴ Luke 23 : 29

TERRORISM AND ARM STRUGGLE

Igor Primoratz(2013) has defined terrorism as *an intimidation with a purpose.*¹⁵ This also deals with coercion, leading the people to do things even against their will as rooted from fear. If a governance is planning for an advanced civilization yet using unnecessary weapons, the former itself was the terrorist. Its position as an authority is not an excuse to put the blame on those who protest against its loss of morals. The parties who countered the cruelty are not supposed to be branded with the same thing. Unless they are using people as a shield and exploitation, the other is an act of terrorism as well. Both of them committed crimes against their own humanity when using fear to manipulate.

But if a person who has killed another as a self-defense yet has caused trauma to witness, it is only considerable. The latter was not a terrorist and a mistaken innocent individual stained by blood.

Steven Lee (2011) for example has given that there was a just war and an unjust peace. This seems to be a laughable one. But given the example, it can be said that war is from necessity and not for entertainment. Supposedly there was an oppressed country and that which has a bounty of resources yet did not help. Was this ‘neutrality’ considered as a lack of responsibility

¹⁵ Primoratz, *Terrorism*, 2013. p. 10

or merely the nature of things? Waging battle against injustices is not breaking down peace but rather broadening it and turning it into an absolute one. Peace without freedom is nothing at all.

“War is fought in order to accomplish peace.” This ironic thought can be mistaken only as some sort of poetry. There was a triceratops attacked by a tyrannosaurus rex. It is natural to defend oneself for survival. The former for remaining and creation, and the latter for meals. When the herb-eating one cannot strike the other by its horn it can cause trouble if not death. That carnivorous being will not be satisfied and was not ‘tranquil’ due to its hunger. Both sides have to strive and defend their species from death, by hunger or being eaten.

It is important for a busy worker to scold a slanderer frankly in order not to disturb one's task. This is acceptable, even unbearable. There are times when living is put into this scene. A ruler has to be firm not to mold a ‘robotic’ sovereign but drive them to think and seek for broadened thoughts that can help their society rise.

This can be for humans too. One has walked a mile to find a river but with water evaporates and nearly dries out. Meanwhile, there is another who has been there first. When it is not a question for kindness, then it is a test of wit.

One has to be a fox to know traps and a lion to frighten the wolves.

– Niccolo Machiavelli

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